

## Marshall University Marshall Digital Scholar

---

Oral Histories

Library Special Collections

---

Fall 11-19-1974

# Oral History Interview: Irene D. Broh

Irene D. Broh

Follow this and additional works at: [http://mds.marshall.edu/oral\\_history](http://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history)



Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [History of Gender Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [Women's History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Marshall University Special Collections, OH 64-119, Huntington, WV.

This Transcript is brought to you for free and open access by the Library Special Collections at Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact [zhangj@marshall.edu](mailto:zhangj@marshall.edu), [martj@marshall.edu](mailto:martj@marshall.edu).

1

This is an interview with Mrs. Irene Broh of 629 11th Avenue. Mrs. Broh was born November 20, 1880. Today is November 19, 1974, and my name is Elizabeth Ann Smarr.

Elizabeth Ann Smarr (hereinafter referred to as EAS): Now, Mrs. Broh, uh, where were you born?

Mrs. Broh (hereinafter referred to as IDB): St. Louis, Missouri.

EAS: In St. Louis, Missouri. And what were your parents' names?

IDB: Sarah and S--my mother's name was Sarah Tobias, her maiden name, T-O-B-I-A-S. . .

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: My father was Simon Drukker, D-R-U-K-K-E-R.

EAS: Right, and. . .

IDB: Both were born in this country.

EAS: Right.

IDB: My mother was born in New York, my father was born in St. Louis, Missouri.

EAS: And, uh, you, uh, had three sisters, you say?

IDB: Yes.

EAS: And what were their names?

IDB: Mrs. Albert Mendolson. . .oh, do you want their first names?

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: Grace, Grace Mendolson of Cleveland, Bess Michael. . .no. . . Bess Cafarelli of Teaneck, New Jersey. . .

EAS: Cafarelli, is it sound. . .

IDB: Cafarelli.

EAS: Spelled like you. . .it sounds?

IDB: C-A-F-A-R-E-L-L-I. Cafarelli.

EAS: Cafarelli.

IDB: He was an Italian artist.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: The last sister was Edna Michaels.

EAS: Um, very. . .

IDB: M-A. . .you have that, Michaels.

EAS: Michaels, like, uh. . .

IDB: Yes, uh huh.

EAS: And, uh, which. . .and, what, Grace was older than you?

IDB: Yes.

EAS: And the other two were. . .

IDB: Were younger.

EAS: Right.

IDB: Uh huh.

EAS: Now, you mentioned that your mother was a suffragist.

IDB: Yes. Absolutely. My mother was an organizer of fra. . . suffrage clubs as far back as I can remember. In 1900 I was graduated from high school and I remember that year that Susan B. Anthony came to Cincinnati to form a suffrage group, and, I told you this before, the mayor refused to introduce her. . .

EAS: Ha ha.

IDB: But they did get someone to introduce her and after that my mother helped to organize the Harriet Taylor Upton Suffrage Club, the Twentieth Century Suffrage Club, and the Sarah T. Drukker Suffrage Club. They were all small groups in Cincinnati who were working for the vote.

EAS: Right. Uh, besides the vote, what else were they working, you know, to improve, ah. . .

IDB: No. . .

EAS: Just for the. . .

IDB: They, ah, they didn't go into anything else because the vote was the important thing, and they felt if they once got the vote they could improve things. They could go to the legislature and present bills, and they could go

down to the council in cities, and we're citizens now, we have a vote. . .

EAS: Right.

IDB: Before they were. . .paid no attention. They laughed at 'em.

EAS: So you felt if you had the vote you could get other things done.

IDB: Absolutely. Women would be citizens and there were plenty of work to do, but they had to wait until they got the vote.

EAS: Right, um, uh, you mentioned your mother went to, um, uh, Cleveland?

IDB: Columbus.

EAS: Oh, Columbus?

IDB: Yes.

EAS: To. . .

IDB: That was before they had the vote. That was, must have been about 19. . .I guess 5 or s--around the time I was married.

EAS: And this. . .

IDB: 1905.

EAS: This was to get ladies. . .

IDB: To get a couch, or an easy chair, and a room set aside in the factories which were coming into existence all over the country, and to provide a room where the women could rest when they were feeling bad or had cramps or had a headache or something. There was no place, they used to lay them on the floor and put a coat over them or something until they felt better. So they introduced this bill which was passed, l--and my. . .uh. . .the women introduced it. The suffrage leaders. . .

EAS: Um.

IDB: But they didn't have a vote then, but the men listened to them, and they decided it was a good idea, so they voted that in their legislature to do it.

EAS: Right. Um, you said, uh, your mother knew Susan B. Anthony, and. . .

IDB: I knew her too.

EAS: Oh, you knew her too?

IDB: Yes. Oh, yes. I wor. . . I r--remember her very well, and my mother was very friendly with her too. She came to Cincinnati this time to organize this--that was long before I was married.

EAS: Right. Uh, when did you first get involved with the me. . . with the suffrage movement? In. . .

IDB: Well, uh, not really involved until I. . . uh, 1915 here in Huntington when I or. . . uh, I won't say I. . . Mrs. Frank Mann, I told you these ladies, helped organize -- we got together and organized this little suffrage club. Uh, Miz Harvey said. . . are. . . is this all being recorded?

EAS: Yes ma'am.

IDB: Ha, ha, I rattle on so, cause Mrs. Harvey said to me, "Why wasn't I ever invited to join that suffrage club?" And I said, "We didn't go around hunting women, we waited for them to come to say, 'I believe in. . . women should vote and I want to join your group.'"

EAS: Right.

IDB: And she taught at the time at Marshall.

EAS: Um hum. And, uh, well, we--well, you were brought up, then in a home of--where women's suffrage. . .

IDB: Uh, absolutely. In a home where I heard suffrage all the time and my mother used to take me to meetings.

EAS: When you were. . .

IDB: And, uh, a little girl. My sisters, the two of--little ones were too young, the older one was very much interested in going to Cincinnati University and getting her degree so she could teach school, because, uh. . . ah. . . none. . . uh, she could teach. Married women couldn't get a job. There was no such thing as a married teacher. They were all single women.

EAS: Yes, I remember reading, uh, in a Farmer's Almanac of the rules set down for teachers.

IDB: Yeah, no married women, women's place was in the home. And by the way, the slogan that I tr--couldn't remember last week was "Women's Place Is In The House Of Delegates."

EAS: Oh, [laughter] this is your, ah, slogan for your, ah. . .

IDB: Well, this was the slogan that one--a lady here that, ah, on the Publishing Company, advanced here in Huntington. She had the slogan all around at this NOW Convention that was here.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: That was, ah, a few months ago. And her, ah, instead of a woman's place is in the home she had "Women's Place Is In The House" and underneath she had "Of Delegates." [laughter] I thought that was cute.

EAS: Yes, it is. It sort of parodies what the men keep saying.

IDB: Women's place was in the home, and no married woman got a job of any kind.

EAS: They were supposed to be in the house. . .

IDB: Take care of their families and their children and be satisfied.

EAS: That sounds--and if you didn't have any children or, or, ah, they were all grown up and moved away and. . .this. . .

IDB: They re--usually didn't live that long.

EAS: True.

IDB: They died earlier.

EAS: Right. Uh, we--lets see now, did you, uh, marry your husband, when did you. . .

IDB: 1905.

EAS: 1905. Where was. . .

IDB: Cincinnati.

EAS: In Cincinnati. And what was his full name?

IDB: Eph Broh, E-P. . .Ephraim, E-P-H-R-A-I-M. Ephraim Broh.

EAS: Ephraim Broh. And how many children did you have?

IDB: Just the three sons.

EAS: Three sons, and what were the--what are their names?

IDB: A. D. Dolf. . .

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: Charles and E. Henry Broh, all living right here in Huntington.

EAS: All live here. And, uh, when did you first come to Huntington?

IDB: Well, I came about 1903 to visit my prospective sister-in-law who lived here.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: I really wasn't engaged but we were courting [laughter], and, uh, there was to be a wedding here in town, and Louie, my husband's sister invited me. They knew that, uh, he had serious intentions as they used to say in those days [laughter].

EAS: So they knew he had intentions. . .

IDB: And, uh, so they, she invited me to come up here, and I came up on the, on a boat from Cincinnati.

EAS: On a regular steamboat?

IDB: A st--a, a freighter.

EAS: A freighter?

IDB: A freighter stopped at Portsmouth and Ironton and Middlesburg and in Kentucky, uh, uh, A--what's that town before Ashland?

EAS: Catlettsburg?

IDB: Huh?

EAS: Was it Catlettsburg?

IDB: Before that.

EAS: Before then.

IDB: The, uh. . .

EAS: Can't remember.

IDB: All along the road, we stopped every hour to take, uh,

things off, freight, and to put some back on, and all night long, and it took from four o'clock in the afternoon until ten o'clock the next morning to get here on the boat.

EAS: Oh, dear, whereas if they had just gone up the river, you know, without stopping. . .

IDB: Well, but, that w--boat, you know, we just went for a, a cousin went along, a cousin of my husband's and I both came together and we s--thought it would be, ah, really. . . a lark to come up on the boat.

EAS: Right, and uh, so that was the first time you came to Huntington.

IDB: And the first time I ever came to Huntington and I stayed here a couple of months and got engaged here.

EAS: Oh?

IDB: That is, formally announced our engagement.

EAS: Right, uh, when did you first move here, you and your husband?

IDB: 1909.

EAS: 1909.

IDB: Yes.

EAS: And, uh, why, uh, you know, did you come to Huntington?

IDB: Well, uh, that's a very sort of foolish story that don't mean anything to the outside world. My husband was in the wholesale business, in a factory, Majestic Skirt Company in Cincinnati, and it burnt down. There was a, you remember when they used to give you premiums for these coffee roasting concerns, and, ah, up above his factory, which w--ah, . . . building was about seven stories, and about the sixth and seventh, his was on the fifth, and about the sixth and seventh was this roasting, coffee roasting concern, and one night the, uh, furnaces caught on fire that were roasting the coffee, and his factory was burnt along with it. Everything, he lost everything.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: They did have a little insurance that covered so--a few things but he wasn't well covered because there had been a great deal of m--merchandise by the belt come in to be made up into skirts and suits, and he lost all that. Well,



he was rather discouraged with the whole situation and it was a case of start all over again, get a new location, get a new factory start, or accept a job in Huntington where his brother had this Broh Clothing Store and wanted to move to Baltimore and came to Cincinnati and said, "Instead of starting up another factory, how would you like to come to Huntington and be the manager of my store?" So he, we talked it over and he said, "I would love it." My husband was really a small man, a small town man. He was born in Cynthiana, Kentucky, they lived in Mount Sterling, he went, he was in business in Parkersburg, he was in business in Akron, Ohio, all over the s--around area, and he was really glad to get back into a retail store. He eventually bought out the store from his brother and then we owned it.

EAS: Right. And, alright now, you said that one of the first things that you did, you know, in, uh, the community when you got here to Huntington was to improve, try and improve the conditions of a school house.

IDB: Well, that wasn't the fir--that was the first thing I did but it wasn't when I first came here, because my oldest child was only three years old and I didn't know how the conditions of the schools until he was six and he started to the Buffington School.

EAS: This would be in 1912.

IDB: And that was even before there was a Parent-Teacher's Organization.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: They d--it was in 1909, I don't know when the Parent-Teachers was organized, but I think this was before that, that, ah, as I told you all this last week, the, uh. . . I didn't find out how terrible schools were 'til I took my boy to school to enter him in Buffington. Miss Wells, Ernie Wells was his first grade teacher.

EAS: Oh. What, what was, you kn--your objections to the school?

IDB: Well, the school house was a horrible, first of all when we walked in the front door, we, there was a door opening in and immediately down into the basement which was foul smelling and a little gas jet on the way down to light the way, and dark and smelly and unsanitary conditions down there, no fire escape, the doors, uh. . . worked in, at that, around that time there had been that terrific fire in Chicago where the children had all run--a fire broke out in a school and the children, trying to get out,

ran to the door and were piled up eight, ten feet high all suffocated and dead because the doors opened in instead of out. . .

EAS: Right.

IDB: I, you, you of course wouldn't remember that, but that's in history, that terrible fire in Chicago. That changed the conditions all over the country. School after school were taking off their doors and making 'em open out.

EAS: I know the schools today now open out.

IDB: All open out, and that was one of the things we insisted on, and the fire escape which is still there, and a clean-up, mostly to clean up the, uh, basement, make it sanitary, put sanitary toilets in and electric lights in Buffington School. That's all, we didn't go any further because that was where my child was going.

EAS: Ah, were you by yourself or were there other women. . .

IDB: Well, Mrs. Douglas Brown, oh, yes, she was, she was the wife of a very prominent lawyer, Douglas Brown, for many, many years. She's probably on record here in town. They, well, Douglas, I think, still, I don't know if Douglas or Camel, she had six children--John, who married a Reardon girl from here, then Mrs. Hardy, she's still living, one of the oldest daughters. . .

EAS: Yes.

IDB: There were two daughters and four sons.

EAS: Um.

IDB: And I think she had about three in the Buffington School, and she lived on the corner, and she and I both went down to the Board of Education, to the council, to the mayor. There was, I don't think there was a Board of Education, I don't remember any of them. They had the mayor, you went to the mayor for everything, and he said they had no money, and we to--you know that's what I told you, they sent me this letter, "You and that lady that came with you will keep your mouths shut we'll fix up the school."  
[laughter]

EAS: Right.

IDB: So they did.

EAS: They, and, uh. . .

IDB: And that was the first active civic work I did in Huntington.

EAS: Right.

IDB: And that was three years after I got here.

EAS: In 1912 that would be.

IDB: Yes, 1912.

EAS: Uh, now, now, you started th--your organization in 1915?

IDB: Yes.

EAS: And, uh, who else, you know, were the ladies who h--were with you in this?

IDB: Well, uh, I told you I w--I forgot, I thought I'd go through th--my box again and look for that letter but I don't think Jim sent it back. There was, uh, Mrs. Frank Mann, she was elected the first president at my home on Fifth Avenue, we had called a meeting, and there was Helen Burks, uh, Helen Wilson who was Helen Burks, Hite Compton's mother. . .

EAS: Right.

IDB: And Hite's Aunt Mary, Mary Burks--these were all very prominent women in Huntington, in church work mostly because they didn't, weren't recognized in, in politics. And then there was a Mrs. Griswold and a Mrs. Greenwald, and a Mrs. Venable. . .

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: I don't remember their first names, but I, they were all down in this, there were about eight or ten. And while we organizing, have a meeting the doorbell rang and I went in, there was a beautiful woman, she said, "I'm Mrs. Goodman and I live in Catlettsburg and read about the little notice in the paper and I believe that women should vote. May I come in?" [laughter] From Catlettsburg! Well before she left we made her promise that she'd go back there and organize a little club in Catlettsburg.

EAS: Um hum. And so that's how you started, you advertised.

IDB: Yes, we had a notice in the paper that any woman interested in votes for women would, uh. . .e--was welcome at a meeting at my home on Pi--335 Fifth Avenue.

EAS: Right. Um, now you say these were all prominent women in Huntington?

IDB: Well, uh, they were highly educated, well-informed women, women who knew the score and what conditions were, however, none of them have, had any, had taken the initiative to organize.

EAS: Right.

IDB: But when I, uh, put this, uh. . .Through Mrs. Mann, I think it was, Miz Frank Mann--she is the mother-in-law of Mary Shepp Mann.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: Mary Shepp married her son, the musician.

EAS: Right.

IDB: Uh huh.

EAS: Um hum. And, uh, yow did your husbands react to, well, your husband. . .

IDB: My husband believed firmly as I did. He encouraged me. Now my father did not. My father thought it was terrible that my mother was linked up with a lot of these cranks and crazy women, dumbbells and oh, he was awfully. . . but my father was a travelling man. [laughter]

EAS: So when he was out of town. . .

IDB: When he went out of town to sell caps, my mother took me to the suffrage meetings. [laughter]

EAS: Right. Ah, what about the other husbands of the other women in your organization?

IDB: Well, Mr. Mann was living and Mrs. Wilson's husband was living, Mary Burks had never married, she was single, they all had husbands. . .

EAS: Right.

IDB: And they all, all their husbands were. . .acquiesced on the subject, they were all thinking like the women and encouraged their wives to come to the meeting and organize.

EAS: Right. And, uh, when did, uh. . .what were some of the specific things that you did, you know, ah, besides, you know, like, did you p--present petitions, and, uh, have meetings. . .

IDB: Well, continually going to meetings and presenting petitions and paying no attention to us, and we even went to the polls on election day and, uh, the men measured off one hundred feet, and if we had come nine hundred--ninty-nine feet inside the polls we'd a have been arrested. They had officers there to watch that, those women did not come closer than a hundred feet to the polls. That was the law.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: And we were not allowed, and so we were very careful. We had plenty of paper, ah, and vote for women, vote for women, and w--do you believe women should vote? Oh, yes, I'm for the ladies, and he'd go in and vote no. We were so snowed under that we didn't even get any votes.

EAS: Oh, dear. Did you, ah, like, go to the capital and visit the, ah, or. . .

IDB: No, no, we never did go to Charleston, I don't remember anybody, however, all, as soon as the women, uh, go the vote, ah, within six months lot of them had jobs.

EAS: Really?

IDB: Mary Burks was, had a job in Charleston, and Mrs. Max--Mac--Mrs. Mann was a committeewoman. Oh, and a Mrs. Bee was a committeewoman.

EAS: Oh?

IDB: I don't know if, I don't know her first name, her name B double E, Bee.

EAS: Um. Uh, well, and, the women got the vote in 1920, when. . .

IDB: Uh?

EAS: 1920 when the, was the first year. . .

IDB: Yes, uh, 1920 when it passed. Tennessee put it over. They had to have so many states to ratify.

EAS: Oh, how did women, uh, react to getting the vote?

IDB: Well, they didn't, uh, react at all at first. They had to be educated up to what their, uh, responsibility and their privilege that, of voting, because many of them, the men didn't tell them they could even vote, especially in s--West Virginia, the women didn't know, the women didn't know anything about it, and the men kept them home and said don't bother with that, that's all silly, and,

uh, they didn't get a chance to do anything. We were the  
o--I, I, there was only one other suffrage club in the  
state, in Wheeling, and, uh, I forget that, a Mrs. Wh--  
R--R-E-I-H-L.

EAS: Reihl.

IDB: R--some name Reihl or some name like that, camt to  
Huntington and helped up organize.

EAS: Uh, during your meetings, you mentioned that you had speakers  
come to speak to you about, you know, women's. . .

IDB: That, that was in, during the campaign, when after, uh,  
the, had passed, we had speakers come so that West Virginia  
would ratify. You see, that's what we did then, we had  
Reverend Anna Shaw, and we had Rabbi Hill Silver, they  
made powerful speeches at the City Hall, and still, when  
the legislature met the men did not vote, West Virginia  
did not vote for it.

EAS: So. . .

IDB: But, ah, after we got the--Congress passed the law, it  
had to be ratified by three-fourths of the state, or two-  
thirds, I'm not sure which. . .

EAS: Um, I think. . .

IDB: Three-fourths, I think it is.

EAS: It might be three-fourths.

IDB: And that's when we began really campaigning to get speakers  
here to have West Virginia, we were very anxious for West  
Virginia to ratify, be one of the states, but never did.

EAS: Um.

IDB: And another thing, West Virginia was one of the backward  
in that they didn't know anything about--the miners didn't  
know what it was all about. They hardly knew what the  
word suffrage meant. There was just a, a very small number  
of them who really understood what they were doing, what  
they wanted.

EAS: Right.

IDB: And that's why I guess we di\*-but they told me that  
Tennessee ratified it, the last state to ratify.

EAS: And, I think it's, ah, I think it's two-thirds of the state, because I seem to remember this, ah, new amendment they're tr--the Equal Rights Amendment. . .

IDB: Yes.

EAS: I think they say they need thirty-seven states and that sounds more like a two-thirds.

IDB: Two-thirds, yes, that's right.

EAS: Instead of three-fourths.

IDB: That's right.

EAS: Uh, now, you were the first woman to vote. . .

IDB: Yes.

EAS: In Cabell County.

IDB: Yes.

EAS: And, uh, where, you know, where was this?

IDB: It was at Kestler Garage over on Fifth Avenue where we lived on Fifth Avenue, and the three hundred block near that railroad crossing, between the Third and Fourth Street, and, uh, the polls was at Kestler's Garage. Dr. Kestler was a doctor 'n they ran the Kestler-Hatfield Hospital where the Big Bear is now.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: On First Street, that's where the old hospital used to be, and that Dr. Hatfield, Governor of the State one time, and Dr. Kestler would, in back of their garage, they, uh, in their garage, they had the votes, and that was one of their main, uh, reasons why women shouldn't vote. They voted in horrible places, saloons, and then we had plenty of them, and garages, stables, and places where they said was unfit for women to vote.

EAS: Yes, uh. . .

IDB: And even, and it certainly was and they said women shouldn't go into those places.

EAS: But in order to vote you had to. . .

IDB: Well, we had to ah, ah, if we wanted to vote.

EAS: Yes, and, uh, now how did you, you know, get, h--how do they know, like, do they know for certain that you were the first woman to vote in Cabell County?

IDB: No, I have no proof of that. . .

EAS: No proof.

IDB: Except, ah, I figured it out and my sons thought I was right. The women were so. . .uh, unfamiliar with the suffrage question and there were such a few of us who really knew anything about it and wanted it--I had no reason to want it except that my mother had voted and I felt it was the right thing. My husband thought, he said, "Women have to pay taxes, women have to, they have to obey the laws, they have, they. . .are. . .when it comes to the other side they're have to do the things, but they're not allowed to vote." So he opened that store that I'm telling you about, he was the manager of for his brother, and he opened the store at eight o'clock in the morning. Well, in order to do that he had to get up very early and he said to me, "If you want to vote, now, this is the time, and if you want to vote," I had registered, and "if you want to vote today, you gotta get up and I'm going to the polls at seven o'clock in the morning." Well, I knew there wasn't another woman in Cabell County that was at the polls at seven o'clock that morning, [laughter] so I figured and my son said, "Mother, I think you are right because you got up and went with Daddy down to the Kestler Garage to vote." And when I walked in the men all gra--giggled and grinned and oh, was something funny, and th--some of them didn't even know I was allowed to come in but some of 'em did.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: And e--after I, paper ballot and you marked it who you were voting for, you folded it and were supposed to put it in the box, and on the way to the box there were half a dozen men who said, "Miz Broh, thank you, I'll put your vote in for you," said, "Can I help you? I put your vote. . ." "Oa no," I said. We'd been warned if we took that vote out of our hands it would be illegal, they'd throw it out. We had to put it in the box. And see, that was their scheme to get the votes away from what the women who voted.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: To get it away and throw it out.

EAS: To make it look like. . .

IDB: They didn't get my vote!



EAS: Make it look like they were being very polite . . .

IDB: Yeah, that's right.

EAS: And gentlemen.

IDB: But they knew what they were doing and we, and l--by--I'll bet you maybe the few women that did vote, most of them, handed the ballot to the men and thought it was very nice of them to put it in the box.

EAS: And . . .

IDB: But our little group ha-we got word from headquarters, Susan B. Anthony's clubs and the, all the different clubs, ah, that, in the country, wherever there was a suffrage club, they'd send, uh, these little notices around what to do when the coming election, don't give your vote to anybody, put it in the ballot box yourself. So we knew about that, th--then after, right, ah, oh, it wasn't, I guess it was a year or two after, there was no more need for suffrage clubs, we had the vote, and that's what we worked for. W--all those clubs, all over the country, disbanded and then, I think it must have been two or three years later, I've never been able to find out the year that Carrie Chapman Catt organized the League of Women Voters, and that's how it came into existence, and we had one here in Huntington. I was a member of it.

EAS: Ah, theyst--there still is one, I think.

IDB: Oh, to--now it's strong and big, yes.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: It's a strong . . .

EAS: Wh--well, do you think that, uh, now that women have the vote, you know, their conditions have improved, do you think they've used their vote wisely in the past fifty-four years?

IDB: Well, my mother always said, we talked about . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

IDB: She used to say to us, "I don't think things will, women will help make things better but that's no reason they shouldn't vote."

EAS: Oh.

IDB: Said, "They, lot of them will vote the way their husbands tell 'em to vote. They'll have to learn and be educated to the real issues and the rea--and the, uh, how good, ah, candidates are and so forth. Until they do, they, the vote will not be in any way be--bet--better that it has been, but that is no reason why they shouldn't vote."

EAS: Right.

IDB: We would vote because we were citizens and had to pay taxes on our property and represent, we were not represented. Represen--in the Constitution it's taxation without representation is tyranny, and that's what we had in this country.

EAS: Was tyranny, right. Uh, do you find it a little ironic that now, fifty years later, most of the polling places are being, use women as the workers?

IDB: Absolutely, absolutely.

EAS: Because I don't think I. . .

IDB: They wouldn't allow us to vote before that. But as soon as we got the vote, uh, the next, four years later, when we'd already had the vote and been voting on local problems and things, I had a job, I was, I wo--worked at the polls, I used to get five dollars [laughter], get up six o'clock in the morning, go to the polls. Five dollars.

EAS: Right.

IDB: And I remember one year, I was living, uh, 623 was the home my husband and I built in '21, and I wasn't appointed, and I was so disappointed. I sent in my name but they ignored it. And about seven o'clock in the morning, Henry, my son was a lawyer, called up and he said, "Mother, are you up?" And I said, "No, I'm in bed." He said, "Well, could you get up and get dressed in a hurry?" I said, "Why?" She said, "Because one of the ladies didn't show up over here and if Miller don't have the sufficient number of workers our polls will be closed and we'll lose every vote in this precinct."

EAS: Oh.

IDB: So, boy did I get into my clothes in a hurry and grab a cup of coffee and rushed over there to Miller and worked.

EAS: Yes. So now. . .

IDB: I worked, I worked at Miller se--and, uh, oh. . .I think I voted once, well we didn't leave from 1920. . .I think I, that was the year we got the vote, I don't remember ever working at Kestler or anywhere, it was over here at Miller I b--worked mostly.

EAS: Right. I, I've voted for the past two years and I have never seen a male poll worker. . .

IDB: No, they always have, oh, yes, they always have a man as the head of it all, usually.

EAS: Well, I've never seen them there when I've gone to vote.

IDB: You haven't?

EAS: No, see I, I vote up at Pea Ridge and, at the school, and there are two ladies sitting behind a desk, you know, marking you off as being there. . .

IDB: Oh? That's unusual because every precinct down here in the city has a man at the head, uh, who's the head of it all, take charge. The other one'll bring in the ballot boxes, the machines. . .

EAS: Um.

IDB: There, there, uh, the, uh, they get more money than the workers, too. There one or two now--over here there were two men. Mr. Koontz was over there and another man that I didn't know when I went to vote this past election.

EAS: Well, maybe he's there, it's just that I, that I've never seen him.

IDB: Well, they, they always have one or two men and three or four women.

EAS: Right. Now you said you spoke a couple of months ago at one of the NOW, uh, meeti--luncheons?

IDB: Yes, I, I spoke.

EAS: And you met, uh, the, Betty Friedan, the founder of the National Organization of Women?

IDB: Who's. . .

EAS: Betty Friedan. That's F-R-I-E-D-A-N. That's the sp--th-- she founded it, I think, cause she's coming next week to Marshall to speak.

IDB: Well, I don't think she was here at that meeting.

EAS: Oh, she wasn't?

IDB: A Mrs. Hity. . .

EAS: Oh, Mrs. Hity?

IDB: Hity was the speaker.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: That day. Uh huh.

EAS: Oh, I see.

IDB: Yes. And it was at Marshall, uh, Student Center up there.

EAS: Right. What do you think about the work that NOW is doing?

IDB: Oh, I think they're doing a marvelous work. Wonderful. Getting into things like abortion, and looking into the candidates, who are d--honest, candidates, finding out their backgrounds and what they stand for. They're doing a m--I get a, they made me an honorary member and I get the newsletter every, uh, time they send one out, I get a newsletter from them. I have a couple in there right now. The ne--. . .

EAS: And. . .

IDB: They are doing a fine job. You see, while we didn't do anything but work for the vote, now that we have it we have an opportunity to better things.

EAS: And that's what they're working for.

IDB: Well, I'm not working at all now.

EAS: But they are.

IDB: Yes, they are working to better conditions. This, when it's right or wrong, this man up at Marshall last week said, "Governments has no right to tell up what we should do with our bodies." [laughter] Do you remember that?

EAS: Yes ma'am, I do.

IDB: And, uh, well, they're working on the abortion laws, whether they're for or against. . .I guess they're for it.

EAS: Uh, yes, uh, they feel, you know, that a woman should have

the right to say when to have a child. . .

IDB: The right to say whether she wants a babe, child or not.

EAS: Right.

IDB: And of course they're working on this rape law which, oh, that's horrible. . .

EAS: Right.

IDB: And I think they're working on drugs, on addicts, th--oh, they're doing s--tremendous job in this job, going on. . .

EAS: And, and. . .

IDB: Things now, that they are to do and the women who really. . . are, the ones affected by these things because they are in the home more or less, if, even if they work, they have, they have to bring in, the children into the world and they, uh, are the ones who're affected more or less by the condition of the children attitude and the children in the world today in their homes and that's why they're working.

EAS: So, now, this can b--you know, this s--you and your movement, your mother and all the suffr--suffragists got the vote and now they're using their votes in order to improve the things.

IDB: Yes.

EAS: Alright. Now, I think we've covered, you know, that. . .

IDB: Yes.

EAS: Movement pretty well [laughter] and I'd like to talk a little bit about, um, Huntington, and. . .

IDB: About what?

EAS: Huntington, the city.

IDB: Huntington.

EAS: Now you said you came here in 19. . .

IDB: I'm a little, I'm getting a little hard of hearing, I think, I don't know. . .

EAS: Oh.

IDB: But at ninty-four tomorrown. . .

EAS: Oh?

IDB: I can't hear too well [laughter].

EAS: Yes. Well, uh, you said you came in 1909, you and your husband.

IDB: Yes, yes.

EAS: Ah, what was it like back, you know. . .

IDB: It was about thirty thousand people.

EAS: Ah, thirty thousand.

IDB: Thirty thousand, I think that was th--uh, census at the time. We stayed at the Florentine Hotel, which is, uh, the building where the Roger's Jewelry Store is now.

EAS: On Fourth Avenue.

IDB: Yes, we stayed there for about, lived there for about a month, then, I had one child, three years old, and, well, uh, as I told you before the little old station out at the C&O, the little red brick building, one, one room building, th--the City Hall was built. . .

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: I think it was. No, it was not, no. The City Hall was on Ninth Street, Ninth Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenue.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: Where that furniture store is now, that Huntington Furniture Store, that's where the City Hall and the fire station were. And, uh, the Court House was here.

EAS: Uh, yes.

IDB: The Court House was built.

EAS: The Court House was built. Ah, you sa--you know, what do you think have been some of the major changes in Huntington as long as you've lived here?

IDB: Oh, Marshall College had one building, Old Main.

EAS: That was it?

IDB: One building, Old Main was the only building on the campus.

EAS: Um.

IDB: So now you know what the improvement is, when you look at Marshall, you don't have to go any further.

EAS: Yes. . .

IDB: See Marshall. And it was college, Marshall College.

EAS: Right. It didn't become a university until about ten years ago.

IDB: That's right. And, oh, Huntington's great d--changed remarkably.

EAS: It's grown alot.

IDB: Grown, we're now eighty-five thousand. We haven't grown enough, we should be a hundred and fifty thousand people.

EAS: Um.

IDB: But we will be after this Civic Center goes through, and th--and th--yes--Sunday's editorial, paper, all the things that, uh, the Holiday Inn and the different, the new banks, First Hu--National Bank building. Oh, it's going to be so different.

EAS: Right.

IDB: It's going to be a l--in fact, my husband predicted that this Tri-State was going to be one of those powerful areas in the country some day.

EAS: Um.

IDB: But we went backwards, so far, I don't know why. First of all Huntington is more or less educational on account of Marshall and, of course, now, I think we're bigger according to the census than Charleston in numbers, aren't we?

EAS: Yes we are.

IDB: We've had so many people, so many people leave.

EAS: Well. . .

IDB: That's, that's, uh, oh, things are greatly changed.

EAS: Um, now, now you were here, uh, during World War I, and you were telling me. . .

IDB: Yes.

EAS: Some of the work you did, the women. . .

IDB: Well, we worked at the canteen when the troops came through on the trains, I was, at that station, we worked, we served 'em coffee, an--but that was when the new, uh, C&O building was up then, and we served doughnuts and coffee, and gave 'em gifts and presents. [laughter] That was w--World War I.

EAS: That was World W--you said your, uh, maid used to knit socks. . .

IDB: Yes, when I was at the Red Cross working and, uh, the canteen, she was knitting at home. Lovely golden haired white girl from the country came in and she--my husband put an ad in the paper, he said, "If you're going to work and help this war and all and three little children," Henry was a baby, well, no, was he born? Yeah, ah, he was born in 1914.

EAS: Yes, th--we didn't enter the war until '17 --'18.

IDB: '18?

EAS: Late '17.

IDB: '17, yes. Well, that was the First World War, my husband was registered. And in the Second World War Henry was in.

EAS: Um hum. And, uh. . .

IDB: So. . .

EAS: You said that, uh, your maid, uh, put a piece of paper with her name and address in one of the pair of socks?

IDB: Yes, yes, she did. And I'm telling you something else that's interesting in the Second World War, uh, we made these kits down at the Red Cross with, uh, everything that a soldier needed, uh, little needle and thread and buttons, and I don't know what we put in, I, ev--had loads and loads of things in these little packages and curled 'em up, and Henry was out in mid-ocean and they were told, the c--call to come to, down to the hall, mess hall or whatever it was and they handed out these little boxes, packages, and he got one and opened it up and it said on it, "Made in Cabell County, Huntington, West Virginia." [laughter] And he



wrote home about it. They weren't allowed to write much because they were so 'fraid of the enemy getting into, finding out, but he did write home and said to "Tell Mother that I received a box that she probably made at the Red Cross."

EAS: Oh.

IDB: Isn't that interesting?

EAS: Yes, and it's, uh, unusual, you know. . .

IDB: Yes, that he would, they didn't. . .he'll remember that.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: Yes, that they wo--well, in that war.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: He was in the CID.

EAS: Oh?

IDB: That was the Central. . .what was it?

EAS: Central Intelligence Department? Or. . .

IDB: Criminal Investigation Department.

EAS: Oh, Criminal Inves. . .

IDB: They were, uh, the, uh, black market is it called?

EAS: Um.

IDB: Black market, oh, over in Europe, the black market was something awful.

EAS: And the. . .

IDB: The people were stealing, uh, ev--right and left and black marketing all kinds of things and making loads and loads of money.

EAS: Ah, yes, they charged. . .

IDB: On the black market, and they had, the government had a whole regiment of CID, young lawyers, over there to work on that problem.

EAS: Right. Um, how was your life, was your life changed at

all during the Depression here in Huntington?

IDB: No, not at all.

EAS: Not as many hardships, you know, as we always hear?

IDB: Not at all, I had no ~~maney~~, we had no money in those banks when they closed up other than the First National Bank and that did not close, and my brother-in-law Mike said, "Don't worry about your money, th--National Bank, it's all right." Loads of people lost everything. In fact I had a, uh. . . cleaning woman, Myrtle used to come and clean for me and she'd put all her money in a little bank up here in, a new bank that'd started up in west Huntington and she lost it all.

EAS: Oh, dear. But other b. . .

IDB: All her savings.

EAS: Oh.

IDB: Um hum.

EAS: But otherwise your life j--went on. . .

IDB: I didn't. . .uh, in fact my life went on, always have, just the same, I always adjusted. . .

EAS: Right.

IDB: To what conditions were. And if we a--now, we had wheatless days and meatless days, those days we strictly adhered to. No bread on a certain day and the children were all brought up that way, to be loyal to their country and to follow the ~~law~~ rules that were laid down by the government for their good.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: One day no meat.

EAS: And one, next day. . .

IDB: Wheatless days, meatless days, fireless days, we didn't turn on the stove, we had all kind of days conserving so that we'd win the war.

EAS: Oh yes.

IDB: Um hum.

EAS: Ah, my father used to tell me about, uh, the great flood that was here in, what, '37, was. . .

IDB: '13.

EAS: Oh, in '13?

IDB: '13.

EAS: Well. . .

IDB: That was the first flood I'd known in, when I came here that amounted to anything.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: We lived on Fifth Avenue, we lived on one side of the street when we came here and then we moved across to the other side. Mr. Fred Lunsford, the, uh, worked in the post office, and he owned the house we lived in on Fifth Avenue, and then when he sold ou--uh, he wa--he got married, and he wanted his house himself and gave us notice and we moved across the street. But in that, uh, First World War, the, uh. . .what was it you asked me?

EAS: About the flood.

IDB: About the flood. Yeah, we had. . .uh, well. . .I. . .we went in a s--skiff into our store, down Fifth Avenue into a skiff.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: And, uh. . .we had a neighbor next door who was a manager at the Armour Pack Porting and, Mr. Cox, Hugh Cox, and he would say, "I'll bring you something tonight, piece of, side of bacon or something that, ham or until they sold out," until the ware house was absolutely empty. The last thing he brought home was a can of canned tripe. Did you ever hear of it?

EAS: I've heard of tripe, I. . .

IDB: Tripe, it's a stomach of a cow, I think.

EAS: Really?

IDB: And th--this was in a can, it was the worst stuff you ever ate in all your life. [laughter]

EAS: Did i--oh, dear.

EAS: He said, "This is the last, these are the last cans on the shelves."

EAS: Um.

IDB: And then there wa--and there was no food in Huntington at all.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: I don't remember suffering, ever. Of course I only had two little children then.

EAS: Right.

IDB: And, uh, we managed, I always was a, a very good manager that way.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: And I lo--had, if we didn't have coffee, well, we drank either tea or w--milk, we had a neighbor that had a cow, and she sent over milk, and we managed.

EAS: Right. Well, uh, now, I was talking about the flood in '37 when the started, w--uh, which prompted them to put the floodwall up.

IDB: Yes. That's, that was when we built, in '37. . .we had built our house in '21. . .

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: And, this is a watershed, this block, from Eighth Street to Fifth Street is a watershed, there was no water in this block. I had a house full, people, uh, everybody stayed at my house, and Charlie Broh worked down, and my husband store was all under water. He went down to the City Hall and gave out clothing that people sent to the poor people that lost everything, because down there she s--he said, "Oh, it's a mess," he said, "fellows is down there and a man comes in and wants a suit and they said 'Here's a suit' and they'd pay no attention to what size it was, what size he wore," but my husband was a clothing man and he knew and he measured the man and he looked over the stock and he got the right size and he gave him a suit that he could wear.

EAS: Right.

IDB: And he worked hard down there from eight o'clock in the morning until five and six at night at the City Hall, handing out clothing.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: I had a house full of people and plenty of food and plenty of water, everything except gas, there was no gas, there was electricity, but we didn't have any water or any gas.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: They went over to Owen-Illinois and brought us a gallon of water to, drinking, [laughter] I had two great big plants in the basement, and my husband says, "If you put a cup of water on those plants I'm going to report you." [laughter]

EAS: Oh, dear.

IDB: Cause the water was very scarce, you know. . .

EAS: Yes. You couldn't drink the flood water.

IDB: Oh, gosh, all the water was turned off.

EAS: Right.

IDB: We'd probably get disease and everything.

EAS: Right, cause. . .

IDB: That was so funny, but, uh, we lived through that. And that's when we started on the floodwall.

EAS: Um.

IDB: And there were plenty of f--men here that fought it. We used to hear over radio every night a talk by some man who, "We can't afford a million dollars. Wh--they'll raise the taxes of these people. You all don't know what you're working for, you're working to b--tax you out of your homes," and, oh, horrible talk. But then, of course, there were some who were for it. And when they did, uh, we voted it for it, that was a million dollars we voted.

EAS: Um hum.

IDB: Bond issue to build a floodwall.

EAS: And there hasn't been a. . .

IDB: Boy, that was the best thing you ever did.

EAS: And there hasn't been a major flood in Huntington since.

IDB: No, it was wonderful to have that floodwall.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: But ev--we had a flood every year, but it wasn't a big flood, it would come up maybe to, uh, up over the First Street or down over the f--f--riverbank or something but those two floods were terrible.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: God. [whistle]

EAS: I know, there's a mark on, in, in Old Main where the waters came up in the building, they have a mark saying this is how high the floodwaters got.

IDB: Yeah, that's right, and they ga--everybody was going around with a yardstick measuring, if it goes up another foot it'll come this high, up and down the street people were walking with, uh, these measures, walking.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: But we got through that. That's when my oldest grandson was born, in '37, and he was born, and they told Charlie that, "If your wife and baby don't get out of the hospital at St. Mary's by four o'clock this afternoon, the road is going to be blocked off, they can't get through Third Avenue, the water is all up over Third Avenue." So he got a, uh, cab and brought 'em down to my house and that's when I had the mother and the baby.

EAS: Um.

IDB: At the house.

EAS: How many grandchildren do you have?

IDB: Well, I have. . .six children. . .uh, let's see, grandchildren. . .  
[laughter] I don't know how many I have.

EAS: You have three. . .

IDB: I have three. . .

EAS: Three sons.

IDB: Huh?

EAS: You have three sons.

IDB: Yeah, three sons, and, uh. . .they had, one only has one child, one has three, and one has two.

EAS: That's six.

IDB: Six grandchildren. And nine great-grandchildren.

EAS: Oh, that's. . .

IDB: That's, these are all, these here, they're all my great-grandchildren.

EAS: Yes.

IDB: Nine of them.

EAS: Nine great-grandchildren. Wow. Well, Mrs. Broh, I want to app--I want to thank you very much for this interview.

IDB: Well, I'm glad, thank you, I'm glad I could do it for you.

END OF INTERVIEW  
TOTAL TIME: 52 MINUTES